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THE USE AND ABUSE OF TITLES.

LAST year the colleges of this country were much interested in the discussion of the comparative merits of classical and scientific education. Academic degrees are now under scrutiny. President Eliot, in his address at Baltimore, brought forward the requisites for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Since then, President Woolsey, in a paper partly historical and partly suggestive of reform, has discussed the bestowal of honorary degrees; and Professor Bryce, in his essay on an ideal university, has boldly expressed the opinion that "degrees are nowise indispensable." Other kindred writings might be mentioned, but these are enough to show that the subject is of considerable importance. It is but a branch of the subject of titles in general.

Americans are sometimes spoken of as addicted to titular honors, and at other times are regarded as heedless about them. But Americans do not differ in this respect from the people of other nations. They know that titles have their uses, and they use them; and that titles may be abused, and they abuse them. So do Europeans. Nevertheless, republics are exposed to some troubles in respect to titles that are not felt in monarchies. There are no acknowledged original sources of honor, except the people; no sovereign, no court, no herald's office, no established church, no royal academy, no limitation as to the chartering of universities; and even the right to bear arms has carried with it the right, in the militia, to win any military rank. There was trouble on this matter when Congress first met in 1789. Monarchical usages came into collision, in many ways, with democratic tendencies. For several weeks the House and the Senate were at variance as to the title of the chief executive officer. A committee of Senators favored the phrase "His Highness, the President of the United States of America, and Protector of their Liberties," which had a half-royal, half-Cromwellian sound; but,

owing to the dissent of the lower house, the Senate, instead, adopted this resolution :

“From a decent respect for the opinion and practice of civilized nations, whether under monarchical or republican forms of government, whose custom is to annex TITLES of respectability to the office of their chief magistrate, and that, on intercourse with foreign nations a due respect for the majesty of the people of the United States may not be hazarded by an appearance of singularity, the Senate have been induced to be of opinion that it would be proper to annex A RESPECTABLE TITLE to the OFFICE of PRESIDENT of THE UNITED STATES: But the Senate, DESIROUS of PRESERVING HARMONY with the House of Representatives, where the practice lately observed, in presenting an address to the PRESIDENT, was without the addition of TITLES, think it proper for the present to act in conformity with the practice of that house ; Therefore,

“RESOLVED, That the present address be to the PRESIDENT of the UNITED STATES, without addition of TITLE.” *

Thirteen years before, at the beginning of the war, Washington had been obliged to exact from the British commanders the recognition of his official title; and on one occasion he declined to receive from General Howe a letter that was addressed to “George Washington, Esquire, etc., etc.,” saying that although “the *et ceteras* implied everything, they also implied anything.” That is the trouble with many titles besides *et cetera*; they imply everything, and they imply anything. In the century that has passed since Washington became President and the designation of his office was formally agreed upon, simplicity has been the dominant principle in speaking of or in speaking to the highest office-bearer of the nation; but in regard to other dignitaries usage has varied. The tendency has been to vulgarize the titles of honor. Near the frontier “Colonel” is a common salutation to a well-dressed man who looks as if he would fight; and “Judge” is applied to those of a more intellectual aspect. “Bishop” has come down from Apostolic times, with a traditional dignity not easily degraded; but the title sounds oddly enough as one hears it in Salt Lake City, applied to Mormon leaders who are completely at variance with the Christian Church. The prefix “Honorable” has been sadly abused. If it had been reserved for persons in the highest official stations, its usage would have been commendable, but now it is only trouble-

* The small capitals are those given in the original journal, as printed in New York, 1789.

some. The question might even be raised whether eagerness to enter public life in this country is not due to the pleasure of being called Honorable, rather than to the love of limited power and limited compensation. If the writer is correctly informed, one department of the Government, the Department of State, has shown a commendable conservatism respecting titles. Its dispatches are addressed without any prefix to the personal name but "Mr.," or with the addition of "Esquire," supplemented by an indication of the station to which the diplomatic agent is accredited. All such handles as "Governor," "Judge," "Colonel," or "Professor" are wanting in its superscriptions. In the newspapers, there is a growing disposition to prefix titles to all personal names. We see not only Secretary Frelinghuysen, Senator Bayard, Representative Findlay, and Speaker Carlisle, but such objectionable usages as these: Editor A, Millionaire B, Ship-chandler C, Detective D, Pork-merchant E, and so on, to Policeman X, and such feminine forms as Mrs. ex-Congressman Y. College titles have shared in this vulgarization. When there was but one professor at Harvard and none at Yale, "Professor" might have been a title to be enjoyed; but how is it now? Once "Doctor" meant something; what does it mean now?

In view of these tendencies, the question is naturally raised, whether in a republic there are any principles that should govern the use of titles. Probably the following propositions will be conceded:

First. Titles are always troublesome. They differ in different lands; they are used in the same country in differing senses; they seem to many sensible people like worn-out finery; they introduce vexatious questions of precedence and lead to needless jealousies and heart-burnings.

Second. Titles cannot be eradicated even from a democracy. People may rebel against them (as did the French in the Revolution), but they will recur to them. Some ready mode of describing a person, and saying to what genus he belongs, will somehow or other be devised.

Third. Titles should be regulated by the body, or order, or society to which they appertain, and outsiders should conform to usages thus prescribed, and should not employ irregular appellations. Thus, civil titles should be fixed by the authority of the state, military by the army, naval by the navy, ecclesiastical by churches, and academic by universities. As for the titles

that are purely social (Mr., Madame, Esquire, etc.), the usage of good society must be decisive.

Fourth. Titles honorably bestowed are incentives to praiseworthy action. Many modest or diffident men have been encouraged by the reception of some unexpected honor; many have been led to put forth their best efforts in the hope that titular recognition would be their reward.

Fifth. Conversely, titles won by entreaty or sycophancy, by the detraction of others, by any form of meanness, or by any false pretense, are more tasteless than apples of Sodom.

Sixth. Descriptive titles (to be placed after one's name, rather than before it), on a visiting card, or a title-page, or a society's roll, are a great help in facilitating acquaintance among strangers, and are heartily to be encouraged.

Seventh. To sum up, titles fitly regulated, notwithstanding their liability to abuse, are convenient, traditional, wide-spread, indispensable, remunerative appellations, not foolishly to be desired, not lightly to be condemned.

From republicans in general, we turn to the republic of letters. The usage of bestowing honors upon scholars is very old. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the existence of a society of advanced teachers and pupils, *universitas magistrorum et discipulorum*, without offices, ranks, and grades—or, in other words, degrees. In the theory of a liberal education, one principle which stands unshaken amid all controversies, and will stand unshaken to the end of time, is order, sequence, system. That which is fit at one period of life, at one stage of advancement, with one purpose in view, is not fit at another. There must be steps or degrees, more or less formally indicated by rules and by-laws. So it has always been. The usage varies in different countries, and at present there is a great deal of discussion as to the detailed requirements essential to academic honors. It takes a volume of several hundred pages to exhibit the peculiarities of the various German universities. It requires a book almost as large to bring out all that pertains to examinations for the degrees in medicine in different countries. It takes a score of pages to indicate the gowns and hoods that custom demands in different British institutions. All this indicates a diversity that approaches controversy. But closer study shows that the differences are in detail rather than in principle. In general, all the countries of Christendom, excepting the United States of

America, are agreed in protecting academic degrees by regulations that no one can with impunity transgress; and consequently in Europe academic titles have a definite significance which gives them great value. Americans, on the other hand, have shown a deplorable disregard for usage and precedent. They have vulgarized these and other titles. Instead of restricting the degree-giving power to a few comprehensive universities, Americans have allowed it to be exercised by hundreds of weak and inefficient colleges.

Thus, instead of limiting the number of charters bestowed on colleges, the supply of charters has always been equal to the demand. Again, instead of acting conservatively under charters thus recklessly bestowed, many colleges have been careless in the extreme, and especially so in respect to honorary degrees, which ought to be high distinctions, and medical degrees, which ought to be rigidly guarded as the seals of life and death. Hence it has come to pass in this country that ordinary academic degrees have been given on such different terms that when we hear of a B. A. or an M. A. we have no certainty what is implied by these distinctions, unless we happen to know what college gave the degree, and not always then. Within the writer's acquaintance, a youth entitled to call himself a Bachelor of Arts in one college could not enter the lowest classical classes in another; and a youth that had been graduated in one institution, and was about to become its mathematical teacher, was unable to follow intelligently the lowest mathematical classes in another college to which he had resorted. Honorary degrees, especially those of LL. D. and D. D., are bestowed in extravagant profuseness, without any respect to the academic standing of the recipient. New varieties of degrees are manufactured with an inventive skill that is truly characteristic of Americans. From the report of the United States Commissioner of Education, for 1882, we have compiled, with severe mortification of our patriotism, the following list of academic degrees conferred in the United States during 1882. We begin with modifications of the old Baccalaureate degree:

Bachelor of Arts.
Bachelor of Letters.
Bachelor of Science.
Bachelor of Philosophy.
Bachelor of Laws.

Bachelor of Scientific Agriculture.
Bachelor of Mechanic Art.
Bachelor of Mining Metallurgy.
Bachelor of Engineering.
Bachelor of Chemical Science.

Bachelor of Divinity.	Bachelor of Surgery.
Bachelor of Sacred Theology.	Bachelor of Painting.
Bachelor of Music.	Bachelor of Pedagogies.
Bachelor of Civil Engineering.	Bachelor of English.
Bachelor of Mining Engineering.	Bachelor of English Literature.
Bachelor of Agriculture.	Bachelor of Domestic Art.

Then there are degrees devised by those who seem to think there is some incongruity in giving young ladies the title of Bachelor, viz. :

Licentiate of Instruction.	Proficient in Music.
Laureate of English Literature.	Maid of Philosophy.
Laureate in Arts.	Maid of Science.
Laureate of Science.	Maid of Arts.
Graduate in Liberal Arts.	

There are also the old degrees of Master and Doctor, and the many special degrees that are supposed to indicate advanced attainments, viz. :

Master of Arts.	Mechanical Engineer.
Doctor of Philosophy.	Dynamic Engineer.
Doctor of Science.	Analytical Chemist.
Master or Mistress of Science.	Pharmaceutical Chemist.
Master of Laws.	Master of Accounts.
Master or Mistress of Philosophy.	Principal of Pedagogies.
Civil Engineer.	Master of Letters.
Mining Engineer.	Doctor of Music.
Civil and Mechanical Engineer.	Doctor of Dental Surgery.
Topographical Engineer.	Doctor of Dental Medicine.
Surveyor.	

Together with titles feminine to match some of the masculine forms last given :

Mistress of Liberal Arts.	Mistress of Polite Literature.
Mistress of English Literature.	Mistress of Music.

Besides, there are these venerable distinctions :

Doctor of Medicine.	Doctor of Divinity.
Doctor of Laws.	Doctor of Sacred Theology
Doctor of Civil Law.	

It is not strange that, in these circumstances, fraudulent diplomas are sometimes issued, as in the famous cases exposed in Philadelphia and Chicago; and that notices like the following are possible in one of the oldest States in the Union. A recent circular of the "University School for Young Ladies in the city of ——" says:

"The Board of Governors and Visitors are invested by its charter with full power to confer such honors and degrees, attested by medals and diplomas, as are usually conferred in this State by colleges, normal schools, and universities; also to appoint *an advisory Board of Lady Visitors, to be vested with the same privileges and powers.*"

In view of what has been said, the reader may now be prepared to consider what Dr. Barnard, of Columbia College, has called "the rehabilitation of degrees." The questions are constantly arising, Are academic titles of use either to the recipient or to the public? Can their value be increased? Are they worth saving? Let honorary degrees be considered first. Those coveted marks of approbation are bestowed without examination, by grace, and are not claimed by right. These distinctions are closely allied to such as are won by election to the membership of certain academies and associations, like the Royal Society of London, or the Institute of France. They belong to those subtle influences, sometimes called incentives, that are among the most potent means in existence for drawing out intellectual exertions.

Ten years ago, a distinguished astronomer, in an article well worth reperusal, discussed in this REVIEW the reasons why Americans have contributed so little to the progress of exact science. He dwelt especially upon mathematics, and showed that in this department of knowledge our countrymen have been much less productive than Europeans; and he suggested two reasons for their lack of fertility: the absence of journals in which good mathematical work could be promptly and appropriately published, and the uncertainty of any favorable recognition when a good piece of work is performed. In other words, the incentives are not strong enough to draw out the best exertions of the most competent intellects. Of course, as he acknowledged, there are always internal rewards,—the pleasure of finding out, the consciousness of doing one's duty, the delights of intellectual activity, and so on,—but these subjective impulses are not favorable to productivity. In order to induce a scholar to elaborate and write out in an orderly manner what

he has thought, he must be assured that what he writes will be printed, and in most cases he needs the additional assurance that what he prints will be read, and again, that what is read will receive due recognition from those that are competent to judge of its worth. Hence it is that modern society has evolved and still perpetuates so many modes of showing an appreciation of good intellectual work. Favorable mention in the works of the learned, careful reviews, election into the fellowship of academies and other dignified bodies, commemorative celebrations and jubilees, monuments, portraits, statues, prizes, medals, and last, but by no means least, admission to honorary degrees, with a right to bear honorary titles, are among the distinctions offered in all civilized countries to those that have aided in the advancement of knowledge, whether their part has been the acquisition of great learning, the discovery of new truths, the re-statement of old truths in better form, or the instruction of youth in the methods of intellectual life. In some countries, especially in those where the traditions of a court are strong, social rank is bestowed on scholars,—as Humboldt was made a royal chamberlain, and Tennyson was made a baron,—and sometimes pensions and purses are offered to those whose lives have been consecrated to literary and scientific work. By all these devices, society is saying that recognition shall be the reward of productivity; honor shall wait on learning.

In respect to degrees to be won by examination, it may be said that their action as incentives is much stronger upon young minds than that of honorary degrees upon those that are older. It is not uncommon to hold a youth to the completion of a long and perhaps wearisome course of study by the assurance that at its close he shall receive the title of Bachelor of Arts. He knows that if he wishes to enter a good professional school, or to engage in teaching, or to publish a book, it will be a help to place after his name the initials A. B. He knows that through life the question will often be asked, Are you a college graduate? It is deemed a great hardship if one that has been allowed to remain in a college till near the end of his senior year is at the last moment deprived of the titular honor so long anticipated. If any further proof is needed, the bestowal of degrees by all the colleges of the country, and the employment of the term “graduated” in institutions that do not confer degrees, may be taken as significant indications.

In order to give true value to these distinctions, the authority to confer degrees should be limited. Theoretically, it is absurd that every incorporated college should exercise such a prerogative. Everywhere, except in the United States, the degree-giving functions are restricted by customs and by statutes so rigid that to violate them would be a most serious offense. But it is too late to appeal to legislation; the reform desired can only be secured by the combination of a few strong institutions. Is it hopeless to expect such concurrent action? Dr. McCosh, fresh from British traditions, made a suggestion in his inaugural address that the colleges of one State should agree to act together as a university; but we have never heard of any echo to this proposal from New Brunswick or Hoboken. Dr. Barnard, with the prestige of Columbia to sustain him, urgently advised, several years ago, that the University of the State of New York should be recognized as the one degree-giving body in that State; but the centennial anniversary has passed without any such agreement. President White, of Cornell University, has expressed his willingness to accept such a scheme; but it will be a long while, we apprehend, before the numerous colleges in New York are ready to yield the privileges they have been wont to exercise. Dr. Woolsey, in his recent article, has reviewed with great learning the historic usages that confined the degree-giving power to authorized universities. If opinions like these were generally accepted, remedies could be found. Certainly, in those Western States where strong foundations have been laid by the legislatures,—for example, in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and California,—State examinations, to be conducted by the State universities and by such colleges as would consent to affiliate with them, might be instituted, and certain privileges might be accorded to the degrees won under these conditions. Even elsewhere, all the colleges within the borders of a State might yield their independence in degree-giving, and might consent on equitable terms to fellowship with other institutions in the exercise of this university function. To the writer it seems possible that a few strong institutions in different States—for example, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and Johns Hopkins—might unite in examining candidates and bestowing degrees upon a uniform basis of merit, and with uniform tests of proficiency. The student would still be known as a graduate of Princeton,

Cornell, etc., while his degree would be conferred with the approval of the board of examiners in the university union. Honors won in such lists would be worth having. The experiment of intercollegiate examinations, which failed for lack of funds, was sustained long enough to show what readiness there is among students to compete for intercollegiate honors. Certainly, if rivalry in athletic sports is worth encouraging, a rivalry in intellectual exertions is much more desirable.

An effort should also be made to restore the true meaning of degrees. It is generally regarded as unfortunate that so many modifications of the baccalaureate title have been employed by American colleges. According to wide-spread and time-honored usages the degree of Bachelor of Arts should indicate that the first grade after matriculation has been attained in a society of scholars; it should mark the termination of a period of fundamental studies. Usage has driven out of this country the degree of Bachelor of Medicine, and the mere suggestion of its restoration not long ago awakened the decided opposition of the medical faculty; on the contrary, usage has favored the degree of Bachelor of Laws and of Bachelor of Divinity, so that their disappearance is improbable, and perhaps undesirable; but most of the other modifications of the bachelor's degree—Bachelors of Science, Philosophy, Literature, Agriculture, Architecture, Engineering, and the rest—might well be given up. It would be well if everywhere the degree of Bachelor of Arts should signify that the recipient has been thoroughly trained in the fundamental studies of a liberal education; that he has received such discipline in languages, mathematics, science, and philosophy, as entitles him to be called well educated. His diploma would then be a testimonial to the world that, in the opinion of the degree-giving body, the recipient of this honor had passed the period of adolescent training, and had reached the beginning of academic freedom. For the public one such title, bestowed on principles distinctly avowed by leading institutions, upon those who comply with the conditions, would be better far than the multiplicity of designations now in vogue.

What should be done for those proficient in technical subjects who have not received a training in the liberal arts? Our answer is ready. Give them certificates and titles that indicate what they have become proficient in—anything but a baccalaureate degree. Let their first distinction be the winning of a

diploma as proficient in engineering, chemistry, etc.; but let their final professional stand be that of architect, civil engineer, mining engineer, chemist, electrician, agriculturist, veterinary surgeon, or the like—titles that correspond with the vocations of modern society, and are much better than such queer titles as those now given. A youth that has been pronounced an architect, a veterinary surgeon, or an engineer, after prolonged study and satisfactory examinations by a reputable institution, would have a title worth having, which would introduce him to the world as expert in the theory of the art he purposes to practice. The public would have some guarantee as to the candidate's attainments, while colleges and universities would be held up to a high standard of fidelity, lest their indorsements, no longer hidden in mediæval Latinity, but uttered in nineteenth-century English, should go to protest.

Our conclusions are simply these: that as academic degrees are already established, boards of trustees and faculties should endeavor to restore their significance by reducing the number of titles; by seeing that they are only bestowed on worthy recipients; by encouraging everybody that wears a title to declare, whenever he points to it, the source from which it comes; and by welcoming all measures that tend toward the bestowal of degrees by college unions and not by a single faculty.

D. C. GILMAN.